Title	Review of Language Studies in International Business: Suggestions and Future Directions for Japan
Author(s)	Liu, Ting
Citation	大阪大学経済学. 68(3-4) P.34-P.50
Issue Date	2019-03
Text Version	publisher
URL	https://doi.org/10.18910/71469
DOI	10.18910/71469
rights	
Note	

Osaka University Knowledge Archive : OUKA

https://ir.library.osaka-u.ac.jp/repo/ouka/all/

Osaka University

Review of Language Studies in International Business: Suggestions and Future Directions for Japan

Ting Liu[†]

Abstract

In this systematic and narrative review of the literature regarding language studies in international business, I outline the research on this topic in order to open up the debate regarding the most important contribution to the language of international business in Japan. Based on the pertinent literature, I based this study on chronological and categorical turns and divided the consideration of language studies in international business into three stages: infancy, toddler, and preschool. I also place special focus the functions of bridge individuals. I then offer suggestions for future research regarding language issues related to international business in Japan and discuss this study's managerial implications for Japanese corporations.

JEL Classification: M10, M14, M16

Keywords: language studies, infancy stage, toddler stage, preschool stage, bridge individuals

It has become trite to say that globalization is changing the business world in various ways and that the research on international business (IB) has become more interdisciplinary. Although language is considered to be a key element in IB activities (Brannen, Piekkari, & Tietze, 2014), IB researchers have neglected language studies for several decades (Feely & Harzing, 2002, 2003; Marschan, Welch, & Welch, 1997). Scholars have even portrayed language as the forgotten factor of IB (Marschan et al., 1997).

SanAntonio (1987) initiated the discussion of language in the IB research, with a focus on Western countries. However, in Japan, the study of language in IB is still in its seminal stage. Indeed, language studies have generally been ignored in the field of IB (Harzing & Feely, 2008). This is in part a result of deterrence that has prevented interdisciplinary studies, as well as the influence of Hofstede's (1984, 1997, 2001) studies of cultural distance (Kogut & Singh, 1988). The most important factor, however, is the absence of any systematic analysis of language problems within this field. In addition, Japan has distinctive reasons for avoiding such research, as it a homogeneous country with a high-context

†   Graduate Student, Graduate School of Economics, Osaka University, 1-7 Machikaneyama, Toyonaka, Osaka 560-0043 Japan. Email: tliu@cbi.osaka-u.jp

culture and as the average English proficiency level there is relatively low.

Scholars from Western countries have conducted the bulk of the cross-cultural reviews of language studies within the IB research (e.g., Brannen et al., 2014; Leung, Bhagat, Buchan, Erez, & Gibson, 2005; Pudelko, Tenzer, & Harzing, 2014; Shenkar, 2004). I consulted these prior reviews to build this study's argument regarding the language of IB in Japan, but I supplemented this by also summarizing studies on the future of IB in Japan.

Hence, this paper's results help open up the debate regarding language studies within IB in Japan. Importantly, I offer some suggestions for future research based on the past research and the characteristics of Japanese corporations. My review of the aforementioned research uses the chronological and categorical turns and is based on three stages: infancy, toddler, and preschool.

In the Shadow of Culture

Many scholars have formulated measurements of culture. In one of the most influential assessments, Hofstede (1984) developed four dimensions to measure cultural distance: individualism–collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity–femininity. Thus, scholars in cross-cultural management research started to rely on Hofstede's scales (Brannen & Salk, 2000). Meanwhile, researchers have studied culture in terms of various aspects: sociology (Erickson, 1996), cognition (Phillips, 1994), organizations (Bloor & Dawson, 1994), professional subcultures (Bloor & Dawson, 1994), ethnic perspectives (Cox, Lobel, & McLeod, 1991), and education (Halsey, Lauder, Brown, & Stuart Wells, 1997).

From a general view, language represents the core of a culture, although scholars have debated this concept (Vaara, Tienari, Piekkari, & Säntti, 2005). However, language exists as a shadow structure behind a formal organizational chart (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 1999b). As a consequence, researchers have considered language in terms of culture or communication. For instance, Schein (1984) discussed the effect of language on an organizational culture and found that, if members cannot communicate with and understand each other, then it is impossible for them to form a group. Language also relates to political, cultural, and legal institutions—which play a crucial role in IB according to the interdisciplinary approach (Dunning, 1989). Within organizational culture, the development and use of language, customs, and other similar activities encourages the internalization of shared values and strengthens individual acceptance of a group's common beliefs and goals (Pratt & Beaulieu, 1992).

The Infancy Stage

Researchers first considered language to be an essential element of IB at the end of the 20th century. In multinational corporations (MNCs), language can distort, facilitate, and initiate communication (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b), so researchers have argued that it should be considered separately from culture as an independent research topic within IB. Language has been a forgotten factor (Marschan et al., 1997), and scholars did not show much concern for this subject during IB's infancy stage. In 2002, the discussion regarding language in IB opened up based on a sociolinguistic

explanation what drives the language barrier (Feely & Harzing, 2002). Although this explanation drew the attention of many scholars, language studies still were in their infancy at this point.

To dissect the language issue in depth—including the problems that language creates and the definition of the language barrier—the measurement of language must be explicit. The systematic definition of the language barrier in IB is based on seven measures: language internationality, language awareness, language capability, corporate language, language difference, language diversity, and language penetration (Feely & Harzing, 2002). Furthermore, Harzing and Feely (2008) revealed that, in MNCs, the language barrier drives misunderstandings and reinforces group boundaries.

Since the initiation of the new language-based IB research agenda (Feely & Harzing, 2002), scholars have made further efforts to divide the language barrier into three aspects: language diversity, language penetration, and language sophistication (Feely & Harzing, 2003). Based on these argument regarding the language barrier's drivers, dimensions, and impact (Feely & Harzing, 2002, 2003), researchers have debated the best ways to conduct research on language problems (Feely & Harzing, 2002, 2003). These discussions have related to the definition of the language barrier, potential solutions for it, and ways to measure it; however, is no existing solution is a panacea (Feely & Harzing, 2003).

The Toddler Stage

On the basis of the foundational definition of the language barrier, researchers have discussed language use within and between organizations. In this paper, I present a review of the past research on language use in MNCs, particularly between headquarters (HQs) and subsidiaries, including in specific categories.

Language Within MNCs

Language has a great strategic impact on communication within large, scattered MNCs (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 1999a); this environment also helps to propagate language barriers, which is why the studies of language in IB have been chiefly situated in MNCs. Some researchers have featured in-depth assessments of one or two MNCs (Barner-Rasmussen & Björkman, 2007; Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b), but others have conducted large-scale overviews (Harzing & Pudelko, 2013). Harzing and Pudelko (2013) presented the first extensive analysis of language competencies, policies, and practices in MNCs by distinguishing four language clusters. However, as the IB research was in the toddler stage, few researchers focused on language's effects on specific aspects (e.g., knowledge transfer, social capital, autonomy, communication, and expatriation) in IB (Harzing & Pudelko, 2013).

To reduce the negative influence of language diversity, many MNCs have chosen a common corporate language for communication and documentation (e.g., Jeanjean, Stolowy, Erkens, & Yohn, 2014; Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a). Selecting English as a common corporate language alleviates some horizontal communication problems (Charles & Marschan-Piekkari, 2002). However, the language barrier does not disappear even when a corporate language is standardized as English (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b). In some situations, people seek language links and alliances to

overcome the language barrier (Marschan et al., 1997). Learning the corporate language can also decrease language barriers between subsidiaries (Marschan et al., 1997).

Language Between Headquarters and Subsidiaries

Also during the toddler stage, researchers systematically investigated language use between HQs and their subsidiaries (Harzing, Köster, & Magner, 2011). Some considered how the language barrier affects the choice of functional languages that either facilitate or interfere with effective communication flow in MNCs' networks, which include global subsidiaries (Bordia & Bordia, 2014; Marschan et al., 1997). Shared language also has an impact on knowledge inflows from subsidiaries (Reiche, Harzing, & Pudelko, 2015). Language influences the relationship between HQs and subsidiaries; the language barrier clearly damages HQ–subsidiary interactions (Harzing & Pudelko, 2014). Harzing and Feely (2008) examined how language affects the way that MNCs manage their subsidiary affairs. Harzing and Pudelko (2013, 2014) articulated the communication gap between geographic locations (e.g., between home companies and subsidiary locations). Harzing et al. (2011) demonstrated that the language barrier is a significant factor in reducing the efficiency and increasing the expense of decision-making in a large-scale analysis of the HQ–subsidiary relationship. This was based on interviews of employees at German and Japanese corporations' HQs and subsidiaries; some proposals for how to solve the problem include changing communication patterns, code-switching, language training, and establishing a common corporate language (Harzing et al., 2011). Researchers have also conducted in-depth studies of language MNCs; one such studied established a link between language impact and equity stake (Cuypers, Ertug, & Hennart, 2015). Language also influences decisions regarding MNCs' establishment modes, which can include greenfield and acquisition (Slangen, 2011). Furthermore, language scholars have also studied intersubsidiary relationships (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b).

The Preschool Stage

Language affects not just attitudes but various areas of organizational behavior (Tenzer & Pudelko, 2013). Researchers have argued that knowledge of a foreign language is a prime factor in the activation of either competitive or cooperative behavior, as when exploring the prisoner's dilemma in a quasi-experiment (Akkermans, Harzing, & Van Witteloostuijn, 2010). Based on the foregoing research, which was mostly on the organizational level, scholars have assessed the interplay of language and other organizational factors. Many scholars have since shifted their attention to human-centered and psychology-based (rather than economics-based) research, as it is crucial to investigate IB from the perspective of human behavior (Evans, Pucik, & Barsoux, 2002).

Language can be a barrier (Feely & Harzing, 2003) or a source of power (Hinds, Neeley, & Cramton, 2013; Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b; Śliwa & Johansson, 2014); it can also affect trust formation (Tenzer, Pudelko, & Harzing, 2013), leadership (Zander et al., 2011), and employees' commitment and emotion (Tenzer & Pudelko, 2013; Yamao & Sekiguchi, 2015). In addition, cognitive load influences language (Volk, Köhler, & Pudelko, 2014). An increasing number of scholars have

started to narrow their perspectives from the entire organization to the level of international teams.

Language diversity influences team building (Henderson, 2005). At the team level, global virtual teams argue about how to build a knowledge-sharing culture (Zakaria, Amelinckx, & Wilemon, 2004). Communication is an impetus for building a winning virtual team within a knowledge-sharing culture (Zakaria et al., 2004). From the perspective of linguistics, communication difficulties also impede the performance of global teams (Chen, Geluykens, & Choi, 2006), and language diversity is one of the major barriers to these teams' communication (Schweiger, Atamer, & Calori, 2003). As language diversity is broader than even cultural diversity, multinational teams in MNCs face language-related challenges in the interactions between members (Zakaria et al., 2004).

Language is connected with thought processes and with social interaction—both of which may influence global teams' communication processes (Chen et al., 2006). In addition, language plays a significant role at the individual level (Barner-Rasmussen, Ehrnrooth, Koveshnikov, & Mäkelä, 2014). Individuals may adjust their thoughts and behaviors based on the language that they are using (Zander et al., 2011). For instance, based on an interdisciplinary theoretical model, Bordia and Bordia (2014) explicated a willingness to adopt a foreign language among employees from host companies' subsidiaries. People who have strong linguistic identities have emotional connections to their languages and are less likely than those with weak identities to participate in foreign-language training programs or to adopt a functional language in the workplace by relinquishing their native language (Bordia & Bordia, 2014).

Language and Power

SanAntonio (1987), who was the first scholar to investigate language issues in IB, focused on the significance of language as a source of power and advocated for Japanese employees of a U.S. company's Japanese subsidiary to attain English proficiency.

Language skills can empower or disempower subjects via communication, competence, and networks (Vaara et al., 2005). Language is used as an informal source of power, and it can have a significant influence on power within MNCs (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b). Vaara et al. (2005) spotlighted the power implications of language policies that were created during a merger of two MNCs and delved into how language policies were construed in the resulting MNC. A common corporate language has three implications, based on the circuits of power framework (Clegg, 1989).

With the broadening of the research on power and language, scholars started to focus on the effects of specific and extraordinary aspects, such as unearned status gain (Neeley & Dumas, 2015). Insufficient grasp of a corporate language lowers an individual's ability to access and obtain power in the organization. Language-related dependence can also empower functional management and the administrative process (Luo & Shenkar, 2006).

Language and Leadership

Language has also been linked with leadership. For instance, Zander (2005) demonstrated language's effects on leadership-related communication, and Zander et al. (2011) investigated whether

cross-cultural language difficulties influence managers decisions on whether to adopt a common corporate language.

Language and Trust

Zakaria et al. (2004) initiated the debate about trust and relationships in team building among international teams. Language dependence is an element of both trust building and relationship building in international teams (Henderson, 2005; Henderson & Louhiala-Salminen, 2011; Tenzer et al., 2013; Zakaria et al., 2004). Language diversity can distort and damage relationships and can even bring about distrust and insecurity (Feely & Harzing, 2003). Barner-Rasmussen and Björkman (2007) formulated a relationship between language and trustworthiness based on a shared interunit vision among Chinese and Finnish subsidiaries of an MNC. Tenzer et al. (2013) explained how language barriers cognitively and emotionally influence trust formation, as well as how MNCs can reinforce perceived trustworthiness.

Language and Commitment

Researchers have investigated the interplay between language and commitment among nonnative English-speakers in Japanese corporations as a result of globalization (Yamao & Sekiguchi, 2015). By focusing on self-perceived English-language proficiency and human resources practices, Yamao and Sekiguchi (2015) explicated that both self-perceived English-language proficiency and human resources practices affected workers' effective and normative commitments—a strategically crucial factor in Japanese corporations' globalization (Yamao & Sekiguchi, 2015).

Language and Emotion Management

Language barriers can lead to misunderstandings and false perceptions of consent (Tenzer, 2012). In MNCs, language-induced emotions can also corrode collaborative efforts, productivity, and performance (Tenzer & Pudelko, 2013). Language is significant in the formation of shared mental models, and the language barrier can act as an impediment in this process (Tenzer, 2012). Tenzer and Pudelko (2013) were the first scholars to build an association between IB language and emotions, both among leaders and within organizations more generally.

Language and Cognitive Approach

Phillips (1994) studied language using a new cognitive lens; cognitive linguistics has since formed a new branch of linguistic research. In this stage, scholars started to focus on the intrapersonal cognitive processes that influence employees' performance rather than on the interpersonal effects of language barriers (Volk et al., 2014). Cognitive distortion is a component of the communication cycle; such distortion results from uncertainty, anxiety, and mistrust—all of which are results of communication failures (Harzing & Feely, 2008). Cognitive and emotional reactions also affect formation (Tenzer et al., 2013). Volk et al. (2014) investigated foreign-language processing in multilingual organizations from the perspective of cognitive neuroscience. As an interdisciplinary area in IB language studies,

the cognitive perspective has great potential for future research.

In addition to the foregoing, language researchers have considered some peculiar organizational elements. For instance, Cuypers et al. (2015) built a link between language impact and equity stake by discussing the influence that linguistic distance and lingua franca proficiency have on the stakes that acquirers take in cross-border acquisitions; this study was in depth rather than broad. As another example, language can be necessary for improving corporate social responsibility (Selmier, Newenham-Kahindi, & Oh, 2014).

Table 1. Three stages of language studies in IB

	The Stage of Infancy		The Stage of Toddler		The Stage of Preschool
Culture base	Concept of language studies in IB Language and culture/cultural distance	+	Language and cultural measures Language and diversity	+	Cultural accommodation and language priming Language management and diversity climate Multilingual organizations as "linguascapes"
Language policies and practices	Language barriers Language policies Lingua franca /corporate language in MNCs language and business/corporate communication language and global operations	+	Crossing language boundaries Language ability and adjustment Language and ethnicity Linguistic Distance Language and identity	+	Concept and development of BELF Language as resources Language barrier and its solutions Language competencies, policies and practices in multinational corporations Language standardization and Internationalization Language strategy/communication strategies Multilingual franca Multinational multilingualism
MNCs' language strategies	Language learning and international management Language strategies for international companies	+	Interunit knowledge transfer/ technology transfer Knowledge sharing within multinational corporations Language Barrier and HQ-Subsidiary Relationships. Language and Inter-Unit Relationships Language diversity in international teams Multilingual community/business environment	+	Ethnicity and intrafirm trade/ international trade Inter-organizational/ multilingual relationships Language and cross-border merger/ acquisitions Language as firm's strategic assets; CSR Language friction and partner selection in cross-border R&D Language in global/ multilingual virtual teams Language translation in the multinational corporation Language use in MNC subsidiaries/ subsidiary identification Linguistic diversity on project network/ in task teams/ perceived team potency Power dynamics in multinational teams
HQ and Subsidiaries base	Expatriate selection Knowledge sharing	+	Headquarters-subsidiary communication Knowledge transfer between HQ and subsidiaries Language decision in a cross-border merger	+	Expatriates and inpatriates HQ-subsidiary relationship Host country language and expatriate-HCE relationship Intercultural communication in foreign subsidiaries Language fluency and host country adjustment
Human-centered language perspective	Leadership Power and status	+		+	Bilingual behavior, attitudes, identity and vitality Common language, knowledge sharing and performance Creative performance Decision making Emotional management Employee commitment; group cohesiveness Employees' willingness; voice; evaluation Gender identity Problem-solving Recruitment, employment, and settlement Trust formation Turnover intentions; career mobility Work-family conflict

Language and Bridge Individuals

Individuals who have high language skills and who can thus bridge various language groups are essential for overcoming language barriers in MNCs (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014; Harzing et al., 2011; Sekiguchi, 2016). Harzing et al. (2011) elucidated that these *bridge individuals* include expatriates, inpatriates, and various bilingual or multilingual employees. Scholars have discussed various concepts related to bridge individuals, including boundary spanners (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014), language nodes (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a), brokers (Eisenberg & Mattarelli, 2017; Mattarelli et al., 2017), and language mediators (Andersen & Rasmussen, 2004). Nevertheless, bridge individuals are particularly relevant in the multilingual context of MNCs (Sekiguchi, 2016).

Bridge individuals play a critical role in the transfer of knowledge between HQs and foreign subsidiaries (Harzing & Pudelko, 2014; Harzing, Pudelko, & Reiche, 2016). Barner-Rasmussen et al. (2014) argued that language skills and cultural skills are resources for boundary spanners, who serve various functions: information exchanging, linking, facilitating, and intervening. However, the bridging function has yet to be explicated in interorganizational relationships or on the team or individual levels. Thus, I recommend future research that clarifies the bridging function from various perspectives and that investigates bridge individuals' identities, organizational identifications, and cognitive processes.

International-Business Language Studies in Japan

Researchers on language in IB have mainly examined historical linguistic strategies (e.g., Feely & Harzing, 2003; Harzing & Feely, 2008; Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a, 1999b; Yoshihara, Okabe, & Sawaki, 2001). However, quite a few scholars have built explicit linguistic strategies that have implications for MNCs. In this paper, I briefly review these antecedents and examine their link to Japanese corporations so as to identify future implications.

Englishnization

Because Europe and North America are extremely diverse (both culturally and linguistically), the issue of a common corporate language is particularly pertinent in postmerger integration; such a common language can provide fertile ground for the combined MNC to develop and integrate (Piekkari, Vaara, Tienari, & Säntti, 2005). Unlike those regions, however, Japan is a homogenous country in terms of race, culture, and language.

Regarding the linguistic strategies of Japanese corporations, and especially the use of English as a functional language, Yoshihara's (1999) work is a typical example. According to Yoshihara's research, most managers in the subsidiaries of Japanese MNCs are Japanese people who speak Japanese. Nevertheless, considering the globalization process, it is essential for such MNCs to promote English-language proficiency through human resources practices (Yamao & Sekiguchi, 2015). Another famous example is the Englishnization

of Rakuten—a milestone of linguistic management in Japan. However, in this case, the institution

of a common language led to a loss of productivity, a lack of time to study, and conflicts among managers, all of which impeded staff success (Neeley, 2011). Thus, selecting English as a common corporate language is not always the best solution, at least for non-English-speaking firms (Charles & Marschan-Piekkari, 2002). The implementation of standardized communication within an organization is replete with difficulties.

English Proficiency Level

One of the barriers to Japanese corporations' globalization is the relatively low English proficiency level of these corporations' workers. Yoshihara et al. (2001) showed that Japan has one of the lowest average TOEIC (The Test of English for International Communication) scores in the world. However, more than two million non-Japanese people (and rising) are studying Japanese as a foreign language (Yoshihara et al., 2001). This combination of factors can cause one-way communication problems and could lead Japanese corporations into disadvantageous circumstances.

Linguistic Strategies

Language can promote communication, coordination, and control. At the same time, it can impede certain actions due to filtration and distortion (Marschan et al., 1997). Therefore, language should be included in a company's strategy loop (Marschan et al., 1997).

Building on the results of Harzing et al. (2011), choosing a common corporate language and providing language training do not seem like adequate solutions in the short term. Thus, comprehending the language barrier well and providing varied and matching solutions may be appropriate in a given company's context (Feely & Harzing, 2003). The appropriate combination of solutions can differ for each type of language interaction. For example, language can impact the communication mode, as a lack of a shared language leads to a preference for written rather than oral communication (Harzing & Pudelko, 2014). Expatriates can ease communications and knowledge transfer between HQs and subsidiaries (Harzing & Pudelko, 2014). Japanese corporations should thus adopt explicit linguistic strategies (e.g., linguistic adaptation) based on functional departmentalization, linguistic adaptation to the local market, bridge individuals (Harzing et al., 2011), and communication modes (Harzing & Pudelko, 2014).

As stated above, several Japanese companies (e.g., Rakuten) have adopted English as their lingua franca. However, these companies have merely compelled their employees to use English in the workplace instead of establishing an explicit linguistic strategy based on their individual concrete circumstances. In addition, the major concern in the international language research has been with language barriers and the collision between English and other languages within limited contexts such as those of Scandinavia, Japan, and China (Pudelko et al., 2014). Thus, I call for more in-depth studies of Japanese and other non-English languages. Considering the needs of Japan's economy, Japanese corporations should adopt other Asian languages (e.g., Chinese or Korean) rather than adhering to English, as Japan has many business relationships with China, Korea, and other Asian countries.

Suggestions for Japanese Scholars

The study of culture in IB with regard to Japan has never stagnated. For example, Schwartz (1992) made theoretical advances and empirical tests with regard to 20 countries (including Japan) to explore the significance of values in universal contexts. Brannen (2000) also discussed the organization of culture in a German–Japanese joint venture. Although scholars from Western countries have utilized large amounts of data from Japanese corporations (e.g., Andersson, Forsgren, & Holm, 2002; Brannen & Salk, 2000; Harzing et al., 2011; Neeley & Dumas, 2015; Pudelko & Tenzer, 2011), Japanese scholars have rarely engaged in research in this area. Therefore, in this paper, I aim to open up the debate regarding IB language studies in Japan; I formulate my suggestions based on past research methods and content.

Methods in the International Business Language Research

Although quantitative research has been predominant in the field of IB, qualitative research has much room for growth in future research (Pudelko et al., 2014). For instance, there are opportunities for qualitative research regarding the evolution of IB studies (Birkinshaw, Brannen, & Tung, 2011). Other research methods, such as experimental research (e.g., Akkermans et al., 2010; Ayçiçegi & Harris, 2004; Puntoni, De Langhe, & Van Osselaer, 2009), could provide innovative foregrounds for IB language studies. For example, Akkermans et al. (2010) used an experimental research method (an instance of the prisoner's dilemma) to argue that language affects cooperative and competitive behavior. Hence, I call for Japanese researchers to utilize mixed methods (Phakiti, 2015) and to explore experimental research methods so as to bring novel insights to this interdisciplinary area.

Content in the International Business Language Research

Although the research on the language barriers between HQs and subsidiaries has provided major advances, there are still many topics for researchers to engage with. For instance, language interactions and relationships are believed to differ among various subsidiaries, but research on this topic is largely absent, making this an area with great potential for future research. Such research could reveal ways of forming communication links not only with HQs but also with other subsidiaries.

In addition, reliance on a single language may be a fatally flawed strategy. The existing literature on IB language studies in Japan is too scant to form a basis for formulating and testing proposals regarding Japanese corporations. Japanese scholars should develop diverse and concrete linguistic strategies for Japanese corporations to implement. What is more, scholars can also engage in this area of research from interdisciplinary or interpersonal perspectives; for instance, using the cognitive approach in language studies could be helpful. Furthermore, Japanese scholars could also compare language studies of Western countries with those of Japan to elaborate upon the language barriers (and solutions to it) and to determine whether the Western linguistic strategies are also appropriate for use in Japan. In addition, in order to be on par with Western scholars in this area, Japanese scholars should clarify the distinguishing characteristics of language issues in Japanese corporations. I suggest that Japanese scholars replenish the basic research on language in IB by including various research

methods, instead of just imitating past studies from Western countries. Last but not least, scholars in Japan should also build research links in English. IB language studies are interdisciplinary, and both importation and exportation are essential, so I suggest that scholars in Japan contribute more papers in English so as to build connections between the research communities in Japan and other countries. This could also help Japanese scholars to identify relevant experiences from other countries for reference.

Conclusion

Although language is one of the most pivotal factors in IB, the research on this area is still in its seminal stage in Japan. In this paper, I formulate a narrative and systematic review of the prior research to determine the standing of Japanese scholars. Based on this review, Japanese researchers should investigate language issues so as to extricate them from cultural issues. However, cultural effects should not be ignored. Instead, Japanese researchers should better clarify the relationship between culture and language (Pudelko et al., 2014) and apply this relationship in Japan's specific research environment. In this contribution, I aim to open up the debate regarding language studies in Japan by setting a new agenda. I argue that Japanese scholars should pay more attention to this area and link the Japanese research on language and IB with that from other countries. In addition, I call for conceptual and innovative investigations of IB language in Japan. It is imperative that Japanese scholars determine how to bolster language systems so as to meet development needs such as coordination, integration, and expansion (Luo & Shenkar, 2006). This study comprises a review as well as a proposal for a new approach to the operationalization of IB language studies in Japan.

References

Akkermans, D., Harzing, A. W., & Van Witteloostuijn, A. (2010). Cultural accommodation and language priming: Competitive versus cooperative behavior in a prisoner's dilemma game. *Management International Review*, *50*(5), 559-584.

Ancona, D. G., & Caldwell, D. F. (1992). Bridging the boundary: External activity and performance in organizational teams. *Administrative science quarterly*, 634-665.

Andersen, H., & Rasmussen, E. S. (2004). The role of language skills in corporate communication. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, *9*(3), 231-242.

Andersson, U., Forsgren, M., & Holm, U. (2002). The strategic impact of external networks: subsidiary performance and competence development in the multinational corporation. *Strategic Management Journal*, *23*(11), 979-996.

Ayçiçegi, A., & Harris, C. (2004). BRIEF REPORT Bilinguals' recall and recognition of emotion words. *Cognition and Emotion, 18*(7), 977–987.

Barner-Rasmussen, W., & Björkman, I. (2007). Language fluency, socialization and inter-unit relationships in Chinese and Finnish subsidiaries. *Management and Organization Review, 3*(1), 105–128.

Barner-Rasmussen, W., Ehrnrooth, M., Koveshnikov, A., & Mäkelä, K. (2014). Cultural and language

skills as resources for boundary spanning within the MNC. *Journal of International Business Studies, 45*(7), 886–905.

Birkinshaw, J., Brannen, M. Y., & Tung, R. L. (2011). From a distance and generalizable to up close and grounded: Reclaiming a place for qualitative methods in international business research. *Journal of International Business Studies, 42*(5), 573–581.

Bloor, G., & Dawson, P. (1994). Understanding professional culture in organizational context. *Organization Studies, 15*(2), 275–295.

Bordia, S., & Bordia, P. (2014). Employees' willingness to adopt a foreign functional language in multilingual organizations: The role of linguistic identity. *Journal of International Business Studies, 46*(4), 415–428.

Brannen, M. Y., & Salk, J. E. (2000). Partnering Across Borders: Negotiating Organizational Culture in a German-Japanese Joint Venture. *Human Relations, 53*(4), 451–487.

Brannen, M. Y., Piekkari, R., & Tietze, S. (2014). The multifaceted role of language in international business: Unpacking the forms, functions and features of a critical challenge to MNC theory and performance. *Journal of International Business Studies, 45*(5), 495–507.

Charles, M., & Marschan-Piekkari, R. (2002). Language training for enhanced horizontal communication: A challenge for MNCs. *Business Communication Quarterly, 65*(2), 9–29.

Chen, S., Geluykens, R., & Choi, C. J. (2006). The importance of language in global teams: A linguistic perspective. *Management International Review, 46*(6), 679–696.

Clegg, S. R. (1989). *Frameworks of power*. Sage.

Cox, T. H., Lobel, S. A., & McLeod, P. L. (1991). Effects of ethnic group cultural differences on cooperative and competitive behavior on a group task. *Academy of Management Journal, 34*(4), 827–847.

Cuypers, I. R., Ertug, G., & Hennart, J.-F. (2015). The effects of linguistic distance and lingua franca proficiency on the stake taken by acquirers in cross-border acquisitions. *Journal of International Business Studies, 46*(4), 429–442.

Dunning, J. H. (1989). The study of international business: A plea for a more interdisciplinary approach. *Journal of International Business Studies*, *20*(3), 411-436.

Eisenberg, J., & Mattarelli, E. (2017). Building bridges in global virtual teams: the role of multicultural brokers in overcoming the negative effects of identity threats on knowledge sharing across subgroups. *Journal of International Management*, *23*(4), 399-411.

Erickson, B. H. (1996). Culture, class, and connections. *American Journal of Sociology*, *102*(1), 217-251.

Evans, P., Pucik, V., & Barsoux, J. L. (2002). *The global challenge*. McGraw-Hill Publishing Company.

Feely, A. J., & Harzing, A. W. (2002). Forgotten and Neglected. Language: The Orphan of International Business Research, *Paper presented to the 62nd Annual meeting of the Academy of Management, Denver*.

Feely, A. J., & Harzing, A. W. (2003). Language management in multinational companies. *Cross

Cultural Management: An International Journal, *10*(2), 37-52.

Halsey, A. H., Lauder, H., Brown, P., & Wells, A. S. (1997). *Education: culture, economy and society*. Oxford University Press.

Harzing, A. W., & Feely, A. J. (2008). The language barrier and its implications for HQ-subsidiary relationships. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, *15*(1), 49-61.

Harzing, A. W., Pudelko, M., & Sebastian Reiche, B. (2016). The bridging role of expatriates and inpatriates in knowledge transfer in multinational corporations. *Human Resource Management*, *55*(4), 679-695.

Harzing, A.W., & Pudelko, M. (2013). Language competencies, policies and practices in multinational corporations: A comprehensive review and comparison of Anglophone, Asian, Continental European and Nordic MNCs. *Journal of World Business, 48*(1), 87–97.

Harzing, A.W., & Pudelko, M. (2014). Hablas vielleicht un peu la mia language? A comprehensive overview of the role of language differences in headquarters–subsidiary communication. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 25*(5), 696–717.

Harzing, A.W., Köster, K., & Magner, U. (2011). Babel in business: The language barrier and its solutions in the HQ-subsidiary relationship. *Journal of World Business, 46*(3), 279–287.

Henderson, J. K. (2005). Language diversity in international management teams. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, *35*(1), 66-82.

Henderson, J. K., & Louhiala-Salminen, L. (2011). Does language affect trust in global professional contexts? Perceptions of international business professionals. *Rhetoric, Professional Communication and Globalization*, *2*(1), 15-33.

Hinds, P. J., Neeley, T. B., & Cramton, C. D. (2013). Language as a lightning rod: Power contests, emotion regulation, and subgroup dynamics in global teams. *Journal of International Business Studies, 45*(5), 536–561.

Hofstede, G. (1984). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values* (Vol. 5). Sage.

Hofstede, G. H., & Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations.* Sage.

Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J., & Minkov, M. (1997). *Cultures and organizations.* McGraw Hill New York, NY.

Jeanjean, T., Stolowy, H., Erkens, M., & Yohn, T. L. (2014). International evidence on the impact of adopting English as an external reporting language. *Journal of International Business Studies, 46*(2), 180–205.

Kogut, B., & Singh, H. (1988). The effect of national culture on the choice of entry mode. *Journal of International Business Studies*, *19*(3), 411-432.

Leung, K., Bhagat, R. S., Buchan, N. R., Erez, M., & Gibson, C. B. (2005). Culture and international business: Recent advances and their implications for future research. *Journal of International Business Studies, 36*(4), 357–378.

Luo, Y., & Shenkar, O. (2006). The multinational corporation as a multilingual community: Language

and organization in a global context. *Journal of International Business Studies, 37*(3), 321–339.

Marschan, R., Welch, D., & Welch, L. (1997). Language: The forgotten factor in multinational management. *European Management Journal, 15*(5), 591–598.

Marschan-Piekkari, R., Welch, D., & Welch, L. (1999a). Adopting a common corporate language: IHRM implications. *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 10*(3), 377–390.

Marschan-Piekkari, R., Welch, D., & Welch, L. (1999b). In the shadow: The impact of language on structure, power and communication in the multinational. *International Business Review, 8*(4), 421–440.

Mattarelli, E., Tagliaventi, M. R., Carli, G., & Gupta, A. (2017). The role of brokers and social identities in the development of capabilities in global virtual teams. *Journal of International Management*, *23*(4), 382-398.

Neeley, T. (2011). Language and globalization: 'Englishnization' at Rakuten(A). *Harvard Business School Organizational Behavior Unit Case* (412-002)

Neeley, T. B., & Dumas, T. L. (2016). Unearned status gain: Evidence from a global language mandate. *Academy of Management Journal*, *59*(1), 14-43.

Phillips, M. E. (1994). Industry mindsets: Exploring the cultures of two macro-organizational settings. *Organization Science, 5*(3), 384–402.

Piekkari, R., Vaara, E., Tienari, J., & Säntti, R. (2005). Integration or disintegration? Human resource implications of a common corporate language decision in a cross-border merger. The *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 16*(3), 330–344.

Pratt, J., & Beaulieu, P. (1992). Organizational culture in public accounting: Size, technology, rank, and functional area. *Accounting, Organizations and Society, 17*(7), 667–684.

Pudelko, M., & Tenzer, H. (2011). Conflict in foreign subsidiaries of Japanese and western multinational corporations: The impact of cultural distance and differences in home-host country combinations. *Zeitschrift Für Betriebswirtschaft, 81*(3), 49–71.

Pudelko, M., Tenzer, H., & Harzing, A. -W. (2015). Cross-cultural management and language studies within international business research: Past and present orthodoxies and suggestions for future research. In N. Holden, S. Michailova, & S. Tietze (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to cross-cultural management (pp. 85–94). New York: Routledge.*

Pudelko, M., Tenzer, H., & Harzing, A. W. (2014). Cross-cultural management and language studies within international business research: past and present paradigms and suggestions for future research. *Routledge Companion to Cross-Cultural Management*.

Puntoni, S., De Langhe, B., & Van Osselaer, S. M. (2009). Bilingualism and the emotional intensity of advertising language. *Journal of Consumer Research, 35*(6), 1012–1025.

Reiche, B. S., Harzing, A. W., & Pudelko, M. (2015). Why and how does shared language affect subsidiary knowledge inflows? A social identity perspective. *Journal of International Business Studies*, *46*(5), 528-551.

SanAntonio, P. M. (1987). Social mobility and language use in an American company in Japan. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 6*(3-4), 191–200.

Schein, E. H. (1984). Coming to a new awareness of organizational culture. *Sloan Management Review, 25*(2), 3–16.

Schwartz, S. H. (1992). Universals in the content and structure of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 25*(1), 1–65.

Schweiger, D. M., Atamer, T., & Calori, R. (2003). Transnational project teams and networks: making the multinational organization more effective. *Journal of World Business, 38*(2), 127–140.

Sekiguchi, T. (2016). Bridge Individuals in Multinational Organisations. *The Australasian Journal of Organisational Psychology*, *9*(e3), 1-4.

Selmier II, W. T., Newenham-Kahindi, A., & Oh, C. H. (2015). "Understanding the words of relationships": Language as an essential tool to manage CSR in communities of place. *Journal of International Business Studies*, *46*(2), 153-179.

Shenkar, O. (2004). One more time: International business in a global economy. *Journal of International Business Studies, 35*(2), 161–171.

Slangen, A. H. (2011). A Communication-Based Theory of the Choice Between Greenfield and Acquisition Entry. *Journal of Management Studies, 48*(8), 1699–1726.

Tenzer, H. (2012). The impact of language barriers on shared mental models in multinational teams. In *Academy of Management Proceedings* (Vol. 2012, No. 1, pp. 1-1). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.

Tenzer, H., & Pudelko, M. (2013). Leading across language barriers: Strategies to mitigate negative language-induced emotions in MNCs. In *Academy of Management Proceedings* (Vol. 2013, p. 12852). Academy of Management.

Tenzer, H., Pudelko, M., & Harzing, A.-W. (2013). The impact of language barriers on trust formation in multinational teams. *Journal of International Business Studies, 45*(5), 508–535.

Vaara, E., Tienari, J., Piekkari, R., & Säntti, R. (2005). Language and the circuits of power in a merging multinational corporation. *Journal of Management Studies, 42*(3), 595–623.

Volk, S., Köhler, T., & Pudelko, M. (2014). Brain drain: The cognitive neuroscience of foreign language processing in multinational corporations. *Journal of International Business Studies, 45*(7), 862–885.

Yamao, S., & Sekiguchi, T. (2015). Employee commitment to corporate globalization: The role of English language proficiency and human resource practices. *Journal of World Business, 50*(1), 168–179.

Yoshihara, H. (1999). Glibal Operationsa Managed by Japanese and in Japanese.

Yoshihara, H., Okabe, Y., & Sawaki, S. (2001). Eigo de Keieisuru Jidai–Nihon Kigyo no Chosen (The age of business management in English-The challenge for Japanese companies). Tokyo Japan: Yuhikaku Publishing Co Ltd.

Zakaria, N., Amelinckx, A., & Wilemon, D. (2004). Working together apart? Building a knowledge-sharing culture for global virtual teams. *Creativity and Innovation Management, 13*(1), 15–29.

Zander, L. (2005). Communication and country clusters: A study of language and leadership

preferences. *International Studies of Management & Organization, 35*(1), 83–103.

Zander, L., Mockaitis, A. I., Harzing, A.-W., Baldueza, J., Barner-Rasmussen, W., Barzantny, C., … others. (2011). Standardization and contextualization: *A study of language and leadership across 17 countries. Journal of World Business, 46*(3), 296–304.

Śliwa, M., & Johansson, M. (2014). How non-native English-speaking staff are evaluated in linguistically diverse organizations: A sociolinguistic perspective. *Journal of International Business Studies, 45*(9), 1133–1151.